

News Release



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MSHA Appoints Team to Investigate Crandall Canyon Mine Accident

ARLINGTON, Va. - The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced the appointment of a team to investigate the accident at the Crandall Canyon mine in Utah. A ground failure trapped six miners on August 6.

"MSHA's investigation will fully examine all available evidence to find the cause of the ground failure at Crandall Canyon mine and any violations of safety and health standards," said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for Mine Safety and Health.

A team of MSHA mine safety professionals, from outside the district responsible for enforcement at the Crandall Canyon mine, will evaluate all aspects of the accident, including potential causes and compliance with federal health and safety standards. A formal report issued by MSHA will summarize the findings and conclusions of the investigative team, identifying root causes of the accident and how the incident unfolded. Any contributing violations of federal mine safety standards that existed will be cited at the conclusion of the investigation.

The investigative team is made up of federal mine safety professionals and experts from around the country. Representatives from the state of Utah have been invited to participate in the investigation. Stickler announced that the team is being headed up by Richard A. Gates, MSHA district manager in Birmingham, Ala. Gates has held a number of positions in his 19-year career with the agency, including ventilation specialist, mining engineer and assistant district manager. Gates led MSHA's investigation into the Sago Mine disaster last year.

Assisting Gates will be Timothy R. Watkins, assistant district manager based in Kentucky who has ventilation and retreat mining experience; Gary E. Smith, a supervisor based in Pennsylvania who has roof control expertise; and Joseph R. O'Donnell who is based in MSHA's district office in Alabama. Joseph C. Zelanko, Michael Gauna and Thomas A. Morley of MSHA's Office of Technical Support also will assist in the investigation.

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